

BILL WOULD PROVIDE MATCHING GRANTS TO PRESERVE HISTORIC SITES ACROSS THE COUNTRY, INCLUDING MANY IN NEW JERSEY

(Washington, D.C.) – The U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources yesterday unanimously passed the American Battlefield Protection Program Amendments Act (H.R. 2489), a bipartisan bill authored by U.S. Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12) that would provide competitive matching grants to preserve battlefields from the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the Civil War.

The legislation will now be sent to the full U.S. House of Representatives for a vote.

“Sprawl and commercial development are threatening the historic sites where our nation was forged and shaped,” Holt said. “Each time a historic battlefield is replaced with a parking lot, a chapter of American history is obscured, and future generations lose an important window onto their heritage. This bill would provide matching funds that would leverage private efforts to preserve our nation’s past.”

Holt’s legislation would build on the success of the American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP), which provides competitive matching grants that support private efforts to preserve Civil War sites. Since 1999, the program has helped to save more than 16,500 acres of historic sites in 14 states.

Holt’s bill would reauthorize the ABPP and create an identical program to preserve battlefields from the Revolutionary War and War of 1812. Holt introduced similar legislation in the last session of Congress, and his bill passed the House unanimously.

The legislation is supported by numerous historic preservation organizations, including the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Civil War Trust, the Crossroads of the American Revolution Association, and the National Parks Conservation Association.

“The public-private partnerships fostered through the American Battlefield Protection Program

have been responsible for setting aside some of our nation's most significant historic sites," said James Lighthizer, president of the Civil War Trust. "But our nation was not only shaped on the battlefields of the 1860s — and this measure will help encourage the protection and appreciation of the full scope of our history."

"With every year that goes by, this legislation grows more urgent," said noted historian David Hackett Fischer in his testimony to Congress in support of the bill. "Sites now presently endangered include some of the most important events in the history of the American Revolution."

Among the sites covered by Holt's legislation are hundreds of battlefields and associated sites throughout New Jersey. A full list of eligible areas in Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, and Somerset Counties is [available online](#).

According to the National Park Service, the need to preserve battlefields from the Revolutionary War and War of 1812 is dire. Out of the 825 nationally significant battlefields and associated sites from these wars, 107 have been lost, 245 are in fragmented or poor condition, and 222 are in danger of being destroyed within the next ten years.

The American Battlefield Protection Program Amendments Act is cosponsored by Rep. Steven Rothman (D-NJ), Rep. Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE), and Rep. Maurice Hinchey (D-NY). Sen. Charles Schumer (NY) has introduced a companion bill in the Senate, S. 779.